

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01

L-02 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 MC-01 SAM-01 EB-07

OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-05 /062 W

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P 301437Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2057

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR PRIORITY

DA WASHDC PRIORITY

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SECDEF FOR ISA/NESA

CINCEUR FOR ECJBA

DA FOR DALO-ILS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS MCAP LE IS US

SUBJECT: LEBANESE ARMY REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE

REFS: A. USDAO BEIRUT 0831 AND 0835 DEC 74; B. SECDEF 1140

SUMMARY: LEBANESE ARMY LEADERSHIP, IN MAKING URGENT REQUEST OF USG FOR EARLIEST POSSIBLE DELIVERY OF CERTAIN ITEMS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT, PRIMARILY ANTI-AIRCRAFT AND ANTI-TANK WEAPONS, HAS MADE CLEAR THAT THEIR PRIMARY CONCERN IS TO OFFER CREDIBLE RESISTANCE TO WHAT THEY EXPECT WILL BE INCREASINGLY VIOLENT ISRAELI ATTACKS ON FEDAYEEN CONCENTRATIONS THROUGHOUT LEBANON. THEY FEAR THAT ARMY'S FAILURE TO DO THIS WILL LEAD INEVITABLY TO POLITICAL "CHAOS" WITHIN LEBANON THAT WILL FORCE GOL TO ABANDON ITS TRADITIONAL WESTERN-ORIENTED POLICIES AND ITS RELIANCE ON WESTERN (I.E., US) SUPPORT FOR LEBANESE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. IN OUR VIEW, THESE DANGERS MAY BE SOMEWHAT OVERSTATED BUT ARE NONETHELESS REAL. END SUMMARY.

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1. DATT HAD ONE-HOUR MEETING 28 DEC WITH LEBANESE ARMY DCS/OPS BGEN MUSA KANAAN. PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS TO RECONFIRM STATEMENTS MADE BY CHIEF OF STAFF NASRALLAH DURING 18 DEC MEETING (USDAO BEIRUT 0831 DEC 74) AND TO ATTEMPT TO QUANTIFY MILITARY EQUIPMENT REQUESTED BY NASRALLAH.

2. KANAAN HAD NOT HAD OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH CHIEF OF STAFF ABOUT 18 DEC MEETING, SO DATT REVIEWED UNDERSTANDINGS HE (DATT) HAD LEFT THAT MEETING WITH. THOSE UNDERSTANDINGS WERE:

(A) NASRALLAH WAS MAKING REQUEST FROM LEBANESE ARMY TO USG, SOLICITING AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO FILL LEBANESE ARMY'S URGENT NEEDS AS A GRANT RATHER THAN THROUGH LENGTHY FMS PROCEDURES.

(B) GOL HAS SUBMITTED SIMILAR REQUESTS TO OTHER MEMBERS OF ARAB LEAGUE.

3. KANAAN THEN LEFT OFFICE FOR FIVE MINUTES TO CONSULT WITH NASRALLAH. UPON RETURNING, KANAAN SAID DATT'S UNDERSTANDING OF CHIEF OF STAFF'S STATEMENTS HAD BEEN CORRECT. HE THEN PRESENTED HIS OWN VIEWS ON THE ARMY'S URGENT NEED FOR THE EQUIPMENT.

4. KANAAN SAID RELATIVE MILITARY STRENGTH OF PALESTINIANS VIS-A-VIS LEBANESE ARMY HAS INCREASED TO POINT WHERE ARMY CANNOT CONTROL FEDAYEEN OR RISK CONFRONTATION WITH THEM. HE PREDICTED THAT ISRAELI-FEDAYEEN EXCHANGES WOULD CONTINUE TO ESCALATE, AND HE VIEWED FURTHER, MORE WIDE-RANGING ISRAELI RETALIATION AGAINST TARGETS IN LEBANON AS CERTAIN RPT CERTAIN. KANAAN WAS CONVINCED SITUATION WOULD CONTINUE ESCALATE TO POINT WHERE ISRAEL WOULD CROSS SOUTHERN BORDER IN FORCE (PERHAPS IN A SWEEP THROUGH THE 'ARQUB) AND/OR WOULD CONDUCT FURTHER ATTACKS AGAINST TARGETS IN VICINITY OF BEIRUT. KANAAN WAS CERTAIN THAT SOME MAJOR ISRAELI OPERATION OF THIS KIND WOULD BE LAUNCHED WITHIN NEXT TWO OR THREE MONTHS, TO INCLUDE BOMBING OR NAVAL SHELLING IN VICINITY OF BEIRUT. WHEN THAT ATTACK COMES, KANAAN SAID, LEBANESE ARMY MUST BE ABLE TO OFFER HONORABLE RESISTANCE. HE REALIZED LEBANESE ARMY COULD NOT STOP IRRAELIS, BUT HE AGAIN EMPHASIZED THAT IT
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MUST PUT UP A CREDIBLE RESISTANCE. IF IT FAILS TO DO SO, KANAAN PREDICTED THAT "CHAOS" WOULD ENSUE IN LEBANON, WITH COMMUNISTS, BAATHISTS AND OTHER LEFTIST FORCES BANDING WITH OTHER LOCAL OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND FEDAYEEN TO ACCUSE GOL AND ARMY OF BEING "TRAITORS" GUILY OF CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE, ETC. GOL AND ARMY LEADERSHIP, IN KANAAN'S VIEW, WOULD BE TOTALLY DISCREDITED AND HELPLESS TO CONTROL ENSUING CIVIL DISORDERS THAT WOULD "SWEEP THIS COUNTRY AND TEAR IT APART."

RESULT, HE FEARED, WOULD BE TO RADICALLY ALTER GOL'S TRADITIONAL WESTERN-ORIENTED POLICIES AND POLITICAL-MILITARY OUTLOOK.

5. FOR THESE REASONS, KANAAN SAID, LEBANESE ARMY WAS ASKING USG TO AGREE TO HELP BY SUPPLYING REQUESTED MILITARY EQUIPMENT WITHIN TWO TO THREE MONTHS. DATT SAID US GOVT AND TAXPAYERS BELIEVE IN HELPING THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES, AND HE NOTED GOL HAD NOT EVEN BEEN ABLE TO MAKE DECISIONS TO USE \$5 MILLION FY 74 CREDIT AND \$10 MILLION FY73 CREDIT. (HE FORBORE MENTIONING OTHER PAST EXAMPLES OF GOL DITHERING ON PROCUREMENT OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM US.)

6. KANAAN COUNTERED BY SAYING NO RPT NO LEBANESE POLITICIAN (E.E., PARLIAMENT) WOULD SUPPORT A GOL DECISION TO ACCEPT FMS LOAN, AT HIGH INTEREST RATES OF ABOUT 7 PERCENT, FOR PURCHASE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHICH LENDER COULD NOT DELIVER BEFORE THREE YEARS. HE SAID GOL COULD BORROW MONEY MORE CHEAPLY FROM ITS OWN BANKS FOR THIS PURPOSE. AT ANY RATE, KANAAN SAID, PROBLEM FACING LEBANESE ARMY WAS TO OBTAIN MILITARY EQUIPMENT NOT RPT NOW, NOT THREE YEARS OR LONGER IN THE FUTURE.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2058

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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DA WASHDC PRIORITY

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7 ON SUBJECT OF QUANTIFYING ARMY'S REQUEST FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT, KANAAN INDICATED LEBANESE ARMY SEEKS DELIVERY FROM US WITHIN TWO-THREE MONTHS OF:

(A) REMAINING TOW'S (16 LAUNCHERS AND 624 MISSILES).

(B) DRAGON (18 LAUNCHERS AND 324 MISSILES). (KANAAN DIDN'T EXPECT THERE MUCH CHANCE OF GETTING DRAGON DUE TO US PRODUCTION DIFFICULTIES AND ONGOING REQUIREMENTS OF US ARMED FORCES.)

(C) TEN VULCAN RADAR-CONTROLLED ANTI-AIRCRAFT HGDY RHIF CARRIER MOUNTED OR NOT.

(D) UNSPECIFIED AMOUNT OF REDEYE. (AGAIN KANAAN WAS DUBIOUS ABOUT US WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE THE WEAPON.)

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8. AT DATT'S REQUEST KANAAN CONFIRMED THAT ABOVE REQUESTS ARE BEING SUBMITTED TO USG BY LEBANESE ARMY AND ARE NOT RPT NOT "OFFICIAL" REQUESTS FROM GOL. HE ALSO CONFIRMED THAT ARMY WANTS OBTAIN THESE ITEMS UNDER GRANT AID. HOWEVER, HE STATED THAT IF GRANT AID NOT POSSIBLE, ARMY WOULD PAY CASH.

9. COMMENT: KANAAN'S GLOOMY ASSESSMENT OF LEBANESE-ISRAELI SITUATION TALLIES WITH HIS VIEWS AS ALREADY REPORTED BEIRUT 15290. AS NOTED IN THAT CABLE, WE SHARE HIS FEARS RE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER ESCALATION OF FEDAYEEN-ISRAELI HOSTILITIES AND DANGERS THIS COULD POSE FOR AREA STABILITY. WHILE HIS PREDICTION OF DRASTIC EFFECT THIS TREND COULD HAVE ON LEBANON'S INTERNAL STABILITY MAY PERHAPS BE SOMEWHAT OVERDRAWN, WE BELIEVE IT ACCURATELY REFLECTS FOREBODING THAT HAS SEIZED ARMY LEADERSHIP OVER GOL'S CURRENT HELPLESSNESS IN CONTROLLING FEDAYEEN AND/OR RESISTING ISRAELI REPRISALS.

10. IN TRANSMITTING ARMY'S REQUEST FOR EARLIEST POSSIBLE DELIVERY OF ITEMS MENTIONED ABOVE, WE NOTE THAT LEBANESE MILITARY--FRUSTRATED BY FAILURE OF GOL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO TAKE EFFECTIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE ARMY CAPABILITIES THROUGH PURCHASE OF NEW EQUIPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OTHER LONG-AWAITED MEASURES (E.G., MILITARY CONSCRIPTION PROGRAM)--HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED MAKE END-RUN AIMED AT ACHIEVING SWIFT PROGRESS IN THIS REGARD THROUGH WHAT THEY HOPE WILL BE MORE FORTHCOMING US ATTITUDE RE TERMS, TIMING AND SCOPE OF OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON. DESPITE KANAAN'S

ASSURANCE RE ARMY'S READINESS TO PAY CASH, IF NECESSARY, FOR REQUESTED ITEMS, WE REMAIN MYSTIFIED OVER HOW THIS CAN BE DONE WITHOUT RUNNING INTO SAME PROBLEMS WITH LEBANESE CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES AND POLITICIANS THAT HAVE HAMSTRUNG GOL'S MILITARY PROCUREMENT EFFORTS IN PAST.

11. WE ALSO NOTE THAT LEBANESE ARMY, IN MAKING THESE REQUESTS OF USG, IS ASKING US TO PROVIDE WEAPONS WHOSE PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT WILL BE TO COMBAT AIRCRAFT AND ARMOR WHICH USG HAS SUPPLIED TO ISRAEL. WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED, OF COURSE, THAT GOL OVER PAST 18 MONTHS COULD HAVE FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE ARMY CAPABILITIES SO AS TO PRESERVE ENOUGH EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER FEDAYEEN ACTIVITIES THAT WOULD HAVE AVOIDED DISMAL SITUATION WHICH CONFRONTS IT TODAY. TO BE FAIR, HOWEVER, WE RECOGNIZE
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THAT--AS EVENTS OF MAY 1973 MADE CLEAR--ANY GOL ATTEMPT TO CONFRONT FEDAYEEN WOULD HAVE PRODUCED SAME KIND OF INTERNAL "CHAOS" (AND BEEN INFINITELY MORE DESTRUCTIVE IN TERMS OF CASUALTIES AND PROPERTY DAMAGE) THAT KANAAN ENVISAGES RESULTING FROM CURRENT TRENDS ALONG LEBANESE-ISRAELI BORDER.

12. ALTHOUGH WE VIEW ARMY'S CASE FOR MORE FORTHCOMING USG REACTION TO ITS REQUESTS FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT AS RATHER WEAK IN RESPECTS OUTLINED ABOVE, WE DO NOT DOUBT THAT DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON GOL TO TURN TO SOVS AND/OR OTHER FOREIGN SOURCES FOR ARMS AID HAVE INCREASED MEASURABLY IN WAKE OF LATEST IAF RADI ON BEIRUT. WE BELIEVE GOL AND LEBANESE ARMY WILL FIND THEMSELVES HARD-PRESSED TO RESIST THESE PRESSURES IN DAYS AHEAD UNLESS ARMY CAN OBTAIN SOME ASSURANCE OF MORE HELPFUL ATTITUDE ON PART OF USG. WE TRUST DEPT WILL KEEP THIS CONSIDERATION IN MIND IN DETERMINING WHAT KIND OF RESPONSE WE SHOULD MAKE TO ARMY LEADERSHIP'S PLEA FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE OUTLINED ABOVE. IN SHORT, WE BELIEVE THIS QUESTION WARRANTS RE-EXAMINATION. AT MINIMUM, WE THINK ANOTHER STRONG ATTEMPT SHOULD BE MADE TO EXPEDITE DELIVERIES OF THOSE ITEMS OF US MILITARY EQUIPMENT (E.G., TOW'SAND TACTICAL RADIOS) CURRENTLY CONTRACTED FOR BY LEBANESE ARMY.
GODLEY

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